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SUBJECT: BOMBINGS STRIKE TRIPURA; KOLKATA INCREASES SECURITY AHEAD OF  
DURGA PUJA

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¶1. (SBU) Summary: The October 1 blasts in Tripura's capital, Agartala, have caused an increase in security measures along the Indo-Bangladesh border, but police officials remain unsure as to who is responsible for the attacks. The central government has sent investigators to Agartala in an effort to see if the blasts are connected in any way to those that have recently taken place in other parts of India. Kolkata security officials have increased their security presence ahead of the Durga Puja. End Summary.

#### Blasts Strike Agartala

¶2. (SBU) According to police contacts in Tripura, four near-simultaneous explosions occurred in crowded shopping areas of Agartala (approximately 100 kilometers east of Dhaka) on October 1, between 1935 and 2010. Police confirm that while there were no fatalities, seventy-six people were injured, two of whom remain in critical condition. At the time of the blasts, the markets were packed with shoppers buying foodstuffs ahead of the Id-al-Fitr and the five-day Hindu festival of Durga Puja which began on October 6. Press reports claimed that the bombs were made with ammonium nitrate and included timing devices. A police contact told Poloff that one bomb was placed on a bicycle and left in a crowded market, two were placed in bags in a laundry shop and a fruit shop, while the fourth was thrown into a house. The contact was not clear who the house belonged to or why the bomb was thrown. He confirmed that the police defused a fifth bomb which was left at a motor stand. Notwithstanding Tripura's reputation as a conduit for Bangladeshi militants and previous insurgency troubles, this is the first time that such an attack has occurred in the state.

¶3. (SBU) Police contacts in Agartala have also confirmed to Poloff that a bomb containing ammonium nitrate attached to a cell phone had been found at a pandal (a temporary structure built for the Durga Puja) and disarmed on October 5.

#### No Claims of Responsibility

¶4. (U) Although no group claimed responsibility for the blasts, the media initially speculated that the Bangladesh-based group, Harkat ul-Jihad-e-Islami (HuJI), may be responsible. HuJI has been blamed for previous attacks in Uttar Pradesh and Hyderabad and security officials have been investigating possible links between the group and the Indian Mujahideen (IM) -- the group responsible for the latest bombings in New Delhi, Ahmedabad, and Bangalore. The press later shifted to quoting police officials stating that they did not know who was responsible.

¶5. (SBU) A Tripura police contact told Poloff that state security officials were not sure who was behind the bombings and

at this time would not speculate if HuJI or the IM were involved. The contact also opined that the explosions were designed to create fear and panic and that Tripura has no communal tensions for terrorists to exploit. He confirmed that no group has been identified adding that "it could be a local group. It is taking time [to investigate] since this is the first time that such a blast took place in an urban area." Another senior police official from Tripura confirmed that police have arrested six individuals, four of whom are Bangladeshi, in connection to the bombings. The contact also stated that police have in the past arrested Bangladeshis with suspected HuJI links.

¶16. (SBU) According to press reporting on October 3, Indian authorities increased security along the 856 kilometer Indo-Bangladeshi border and three members of the National Security Guards (NSG) accompanied by a team of explosive ordinance experts from the National Forensic Laboratory in New Delhi, arrived in Agartala late on October 2 to conduct investigations. A Tripura police contact confirmed that a NSG team had arrived in Agartala to investigate the bombings and stated that, "despite the extensive fencing work done the border is porous."

#### Kolkata's Security Posture

¶17. (SBU) Given the recent bombings in India, there has recently been an up tick in press reporting that Kolkata may experience a terrorist attack during the Durga Puja. In recent days, Poloff has observed an increase of uniformed police officers at metro stations and popular shopping areas. However, with an estimated four million people expected to attend the pujas on a daily basis and organizers being responsible for procuring and installing CCTVs in addition to providing volunteers to monitor any suspicious persons, it is uncertain how effective these measures will be to deter any attacks should they occur. On

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October 6, the Kolkata police began sending text messages to cell phone users reminding them to remain vigilant and report any suspicious activity.

¶18. (SBU) Poloff spoke with a senior member of the Special Branch, the intelligence wing of the Kolkata police, who said that they had received no intelligence or tips regarding any possible attack during the Durga Puja. The contact stated that of the 26,000-strong Kolkata police force, 12,000-15,000 will be on duty during the festival with the remaining police officers on stand-by.

#### Comment

¶19. (SBU) Although it is not clear who carried out the Agartala bombings or why, they are similar to the recent bombings in other Indian cities. However, with no claims of responsibility, it is uncertain whether the blasts are connected in any way to the recent bombings similar to those experienced by New Delhi, Bangalore, and Ahmedabad. The bombings in Tripura call into question an often held assumption that terrorists in India do not conduct operations in areas that serve as transit routes from neighboring Bangladesh. The Kolkata police clearly have not made the assumption that Kolkata and West Bengal are immune from terrorist attacks and are taking unprecedented measures to prevent a possible attack during the week-long Durga Puja.

PAYNE